



Nevada Site Office News

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“Unicorn” Subcritical Experiment Planned

The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has been conducting subcritical experiments in support of the Stockpile Stewardship Program at the Nevada Test Site (NTS) since 1997. These experiments have provided important data for maintaining the safety and reliability of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile and have helped to maintain vital skills at NTS and the nuclear weapons laboratories. They are also fully consistent with the U.S. underground nuclear test moratorium in force since 1992.

The Unicorn subcritical experiment, which is planned to be carried out in 2004, will be conducted in a vertical hole configuration at a location of the NTS known as U6c. Initial site preparation for this experiment is underway. This activity, and the means for emplacement of the experimental hardware into the vertical hole, will appear visually similar to those employed in underground nuclear tests conducted prior to the 1992 moratorium. All previous subcritical experiments have been conducted in horizontal tunnels in the U1a complex located 960 feet underground at NTS.

In addition to providing important information for stockpile stewardship, the Unicorn subcritical experiment will exercise key NTS capabilities not otherwise exercised in experiments carried out at the U1a complex.

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